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- ART. III. — 1. *Oration at the Inauguration of the Statue of Benjamin Franklin, in his Native City, September 17, 1856.*
By HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP. Boston. 1856.
2. *Proceedings on the Centennial Anniversary of the Setting up of the First Printing-Press in New Hampshire.* Portsmouth. 1856.
3. *The Public Reception to George Peabody, at Danvers.*
American Journal of Education for December, 1856. Art. IX.

THE holidays the record of which gives us our text, all having occurred during the last autumn, are so characteristic of our national tendencies, progress, and social economy, that they afford suggestive materials and indicate normal principles. Boston rears a statue of her illustrious son, and for its inauguration trades convene, emblematic processions fill the thoroughfares, and the voice of song and of eloquence revives the career of the printer's apprentice, the electrical discoverer, and the patriotic statesman. A hundred years elapse since a newspaper was first issued in New Hampshire, and her children are summoned to a festival at Portsmouth, where the history of the press is rehearsed, and its intimate relation to civic freedom and culture commemorated by speeches, tableaux, music, and feasting. An opulent London banker, of American birth, revisits his native town, enriched by his gift with a free library, and Danvers welcomes him with an escort of her fairest denizens, a public banquet, and the greetings of the most eminent citizens of the State. In the occasions and the method of celebration, these were emphatically American holidays. In each case the interest survives the day, and is of so permanent and historical a nature as to claim printed memorials. Diverse as these celebrations may appear at the first glance, they include a recognition of the same general principles. Franklin's example typifies self-reliance and popular education; the early establishment of a newspaper, the freedom and activity of the press; and the donation of Mr. Peabody, the habit of reading which constitutes at once the distinction and the safeguard of our

people, whose patron saints are practical workers in the sphere of the useful, whose *festas* are anniversaries of popular institutions, the birthdays of patriots, the visits of generous citizens, made attractive, not by shows of tapestry and clerical processions, exhibitions of apostolic bones, genuflections, and jewelry, but through eloquent appeals to the reason, and gratulatory assemblies, — the display of the trophies of industry, and the elevation of the badges of municipal freedom.

But while we accord this significance to our holidays, we also feel their casual tenure, their want of recreative zest, of enjoyable spirit, and of cordial popular estimation; and are irresistibly prompted to discuss their claims as one of the neglected elements of our national life. It is an anomalous fact in our civilization, that we have no one holiday, the observance of which is unanimous. It is an exceptional trait in our nationality, that its sentiment finds no annual occasion when the hearts of the people thrill with an identical emotion, absorbing in patriotic instinct and mutual reminiscence all personal interests and local prejudice. It is an unfortunate circumstance, that no American festival, absolutely consecrated and universally acknowledged, hallows the calendar to the imagination of our people. Anniversaries enough, we boast, of historical importance, but they are casually observed; events of glorious memory crowd our brief annals, but they are not consciously identified with recurring periods; universal celebrities are included in the roll of our country's benefactors, but the dates of their birth, services, and decease form no saints' days for the Republic. How often in the crises of sectional passion does the moral necessity of a common shrine, a national feast, a place, a time, or a memory sacred to fraternal sympathies and general observance, appall the patriotic heart with regret, or warm it with desire! Were such a nucleus for popular enthusiasm, such a goal for a nation's pilgrimage, such a day for reciprocal gratulation, our own, — a time when the oath of fealty could be renewed at the same altar, the voice of encouragement be echoed from every section of the Confederacy, the memory of what has been, the appreciation of what is, and the hope

of what may be, simultaneously felt, — what a bond of union, a motive to forbearance, and a pledge of nationality would be secured! Were there not in us sentiments as well as appetites, reflection as well as passion, humanity might rest content with such “note of time” as is marked on a sun-dial or in the almanac; but, constituted as we are, a profound and universal instinct prompts observances where-with faith, hope, and memory may keep register of the fleeting hours and months. In accordance with this instinct, periodical sacrifice, song, prayer, and banquet, in all countries and ages, have inscribed with heart-felt ceremony the shadowy lapse of being. Without law or art, the savage thus identifies his consciousness with the seasons and their transition; anniversaries typify vicissitude; the wheel of custom stops a while; events, convictions, reminiscences, and aspirations are personified in the calendar; and that reason which “looks before and after,” asserts itself under every guise from the barbarian rite to the Christian festival, and begets the holiday as an institution natural to man. If the ballads of a people are the essence of its history, holidays are, on similar grounds, the free utterance of its character; and, as such, are of great interest to the philosopher, and fraught with endearing associations to the philanthropist.

The spontaneous in nations as well as in individuals is attractive to the eye of philosophy, because it is eminently characteristic. The great charm of biography is its revelation of the play of mind and the aspect of character, when freed from conventional restraints. And, in the life of nations, how inadequate are the records of diplomacy, legislation, and war, — the official and economical development, — to indicate what is instinctive and typical in character! It is when the armor of daily toil, the insignia of office, the prosaic tasks of life, are laid aside, that what is peculiar in form and graceful in movement becomes evident. In the glee or solemnity of the festival, the soul breaks forth; in the fusion of a common idea, the heart of a country is made freely manifest.

Accordingly, the manner, the spirit, and the object of festal observances are among the most significant illustrations of history. An accurate chart of these from the earliest time would

afford a reliable index to the progress of humanity, and suggest a remarkable identity of natural wants, tendencies, and aspirations. There is, for instance, a singular affinity between the Saturnalia of the ancient and the Carnival of the modern Romans, as between the sports of the ancient circus and the bull-fights of Spain; while so closely parallel, in some respects, are Druidical and monastic vows and fanaticism, that one of the most popular of modern Italian operas, which revived the picturesque costume and sylvan rites of the Druids, was threatened with prohibition, as a satire upon the Church. It would well repay antiquarian investigation, to trace the germ of holiday customs from the crude superstitions of barbarians, through the usages incident to a more refined mythology, to their modified reappearance in the Romish temples, where Pagan rites are invested with Christian meaning, the statue of Jupiter is transformed into St. Peter, and the sarcophagus of a heathen becomes the font of holy baptism. Gibbon tells us how shrewd Pope Boniface professed but to rehabilitate old customs, when he revived the secular games in Rome. Not only are traces of Pagan forms discoverable in the modern holidays, but the mediæval taste for exhibitions of animal courage and vigor still lives in the love of prize-fights and horse-racing so prevalent in England, and the ring and the cockpit minister to the same brutal passions which of old filled the Flavian Amphitheatre with eager spectators, and gave a relish to the ordeal of blood. In the abuses of the modern pastime we behold the relics of barbarism, and the perpetuity of such national tastes is evident in the combative instinct which once sustained the orders of chivalry, and in our day has lured thousands to the destructive battle-fields of the Crimea.

Not only do the social organizations devoted to popular amusements and economics thus give the best tokens of local manners and the average taste, but they directly minister to the culture they illustrate. The gladiator "butchered to make a Roman holiday" nurtured with his life-blood and dying agonies the ferocious propensities and military hardihood of the imperial cohorts. The graceful posture and fine muscular display of the wrestler and discus-player of Athens reappeared in the statues

which peopled her squares and temples. The equine beauty and swiftness exhibited at Derby and Ascott keep alive the emulation which renders England famous for breeds of horses, and her gentry healthful by equestrian exercise. The custom of musical accompaniments at every German symposium has, in a great measure, bred a nation of vocal and instrumental performers. The dance became a versatile art in France, because it was, as it still is, the national pastime. The Circassian is expert with steed and rifle from the habit of dexterity acquired in the festive trials of skill, excellence in which is the qualification for leadership. The compass, flexibility, and sweetness of the human voice so characteristic of the people of Italy, have been attained through ages of vocal practice in ecclesiastical and rural festivals; and the copious melody of their language gradually arose through the *canzoni* of troubadours and the rhythmical feats of *improvvisatori*. The deafening clang of gongs, the blinding smoke of chowsticks, and the dazzling light of innumerable lanterns, wherewith the Chinese celebrate their national feasts, are to European senses the most oppressive imaginable tokens of a stagnant and primitive civilization, — the festive elements of the semi-barbarism artistically represented by their grotesque figures, ignorance of perspective, interminable alphabet, pinched feet, bare scalps, and implacable hatred of innovation, both in the processes and the forms of advanced taste. Even the aboriginal feasts of this continent were the best nutriment of what the American Indians, in their palmy days, could boast of, — strength, agility, and grace. Thus, from the most cultivated to the least developed races, what is adopted and expressed in a recreative or holiday manner, — what is thus done and said, sought and felt, — the rallying-point of popular sympathy, the occasion of the universal joy or reverence, — is a moral fact of unique and permanent interest; on the one hand, as illustrative of the kind and degree of civilization attained, and of the instinctive direction of the national mind, and on the other, as indicative of the means and the processes whereby the wants are met, and the ideas realized, which stimulate and mould a nation's genius and faith.

The testimony of observation accords with that of history

in this regard. The foreign scenes which haunt the memory as popular illustrations of character are those of holidays. The government, literature, art, and society of a country may be individually represented to our minds; but when we discuss national traits, we instinctively refer to the pastimes, the religious ceremonials, and the festivals of a people. Where has the pugilistic hilarity of the Irish scope as at Donnybrook Fair? Is a dull parliamentary speech, or an animated debate at the race-course, most vivid with the spirit of English life? Market-day, and harvest-home, and saintly anniversaries, evoke from its commonplace level the life of the humble and the princely, and they appear before the stranger under a genuine and characteristic guise. We associate the French, as a people, with the rustic groups under the trees of Montmorency, or the crowds of neatly-dressed and gay *bourgeoise* at the Jardin d'Hiver,—finding in green grass, light, cheap wine and comfits, a flower in the hair, a waltz and saunter, more real pleasure than a less frugal and mercurial people can extract from a solemn feast, garnished with extravagant upholstery, and loaded with luxurious viands. We recall the Italians and Spaniards in memory by the ceaseless bells of their *festas* vibrating in the air; by the silver knobs and graceful *mezzono* of the peasant's holiday; by the tinkle of guitars, the *boleio* and processions, or the lines of stars marking the architecture of illuminated temples; by the euphonious greeting, the light-hearted carol, the abundant fruit, the knots of flowers, the gay jerkin and bodice, which render the urbane throng so picturesque in aspect and childlike in enjoyment. The sadness which overhangs the very idea of Italy, considered as a political entity, exhales, like magic, before the spectacle of a Tuscan vintage. The heaps of purple and amber grapes, the gray and pensive-eyed oxen, the reeking butts, the yellow vine-leaves waving in the autumn sun, form studies for the pencil; but the human interest of the scene infinitely endears its still-life. Kindred and friends, in festal array, celebrate their work, and rejoice over the Falernian, Lachryma Christi, or Vino Nostrale, with a frank and *naïve* gratitude akin to the mellow smiles of productive Nature; the distance between the lord of the soil and the peasant is, for

the time, lost in a mutual and innocent triumph; they who are wont to serve become guests; the dance and song, the compliment and repartee, the toast and the smile, are interchanged, on the one side with artless loyalty, and on the other with a condescension merged in graciousness. It seems as if the hand of Nature, in yielding her annual tribute, literally imparted to prince and peasant the touch which makes "the whole world kin."

The contrast in respect of pastime is felt most keenly when we observe life at home, with the impresssions of the Old World fresh in our minds. We have perhaps joined the laughing group who cluster around Punch and Judy on the Mole of Naples; we have watched the flitting emotions on swarthy listeners who greedily drink in the story-teller's words on the shore of Palermo; we have made an old gondolier chant a lyric of Tasso, at sunset, on the Adriatic; our hostess at Florence has decked the window with a consecrated branch on Palm Sunday; we have seen the poor *contadini* of a Roman village sport their silver knobs, and hang out their one bit of crimson tapestry, in honor of some local saint; we have examined the last mosaic exhumed from Pompeii, brilliant with festal rites; and thus, as an element both of history and experience, of religion and domesticity, the recreative side of life appears essential and absolute, while the hurrying crowd, hasty salutations, and absorption in affairs around us, seem to repudiate and ignore the inference, and to confirm the opinion of one whose existence was divided between this country and Europe, that "the Americans are practical Stoics."

To appreciate the value of holidays merely as a conservative element of faith, we have but to remember the Jewish festivals. Ages of dispersion, isolation, contempt, and persecution — all that mortal agencies can effect to chill the zeal or to discredit the traditions of the Hebrews — have not in the slightest degree lessened the sanction or diminished the observance of that festival, to keep which the Divine Founder of our religion, nineteen centuries ago, went up to Jerusalem with his disciples. And it is difficult to conceive a more sublime idea than is involved in this fact. On the day of the

Passover, in the Austrian banker's splendid palace, in the miserable Ghetto of Rome, under the shadow of Syrian mosques, in the wretched by-way hostel of Poland, at the foot of Egyptian pyramids, beside the Holy Sepulchre, among the money-changers of Paris and the pawnbrokers of London, along the canals of Holland, in Siberia, Denmark, Calcutta, and New York, in every nook of the civilized world, the Jew celebrates his noble, national feast; and who can estimate how much this and similar rites have to do with the eternal marvel of that nation's survival?

The conservatism inherent in traditional festivals not only binds together and keeps intact the scattered communities of a dispersed race, but saves from extinction many local and inherited characteristics. We were never so impressed with this thought, as on the occasion of an annual village fête in Sicily. Perhaps no territory of the same limits comprehends such a variety of elements in the basis of its existent population, as that luxuriant and beautiful, but ill-fated island. Its surface is venerable with the architectural remains of successive races. Here a Grecian temple, there a Saracenic dome; now a Roman fortification, again a Norman tower; and often a mediæval ruin of some incongruous order attracts the traveler's gaze from broad valleys rich with grain, olive-orchards and citron-groves, vineyards planted in decomposed lava, hedges of aloe, meadows of wild-flowers, a torrent's arid path, a holly-crowned mountain, a cork forest, or a seaward landscape. But the more flexible materials left by the receding tide of invasion are so blended in the physiognomies, the customs, and the *patois* of the inhabitants, that only nice investigation can trace them amid the generic phenomena of nationality now recognized as Sicilian. Yet the people of a village but a few miles from the capital have so identified their Greek origin with the costume of a holiday, that, as one scans their festal array, it is easy to imagine that the unmixed blood of their classic progenitors flushes in those dark eyes and mantles in those olive cheeks. This ancestral dress is the endeared heirloom in the homes of the peasantry, assumed with conscious pride and gayety to meet the wondering eyes of neighboring *contadini*, curious Palermitans, and delighted strangers, who flock to the spectacle.

The love of power is a great teacher of human instincts; and despotism, both civil and spiritual, has, in all ages, availed itself of the natural appetency for festivals to multiply and enhance shows, amusements, and holidays, in a manner which yields profitable lessons to free communities intent on adapting the same means to nobler ends. The stated pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet is an important part of the superstitious machinery of Mahometan tyranny over the will and conscience; and it is difficult to conceive now to what an extent the unity and zeal of the early Christians were enforced by specific days of ceremonial, and by such a hallowed goal as Jerusalem.

Imperial authority in France is upheld by festive seductions adapted to a mercurial populace, and by masqued balls, municipal banquets, showers of bon-bons, and ascents of balloons, contrived to win attention from republican discontent. Mercenary rulers of petty states, by the gift of stars and red ribbons, and liberal contributions to the opera, obtain an economical safeguard. The policy of the Romish Church is nowhere more striking than in her holiday institutions, appealing to native sentiment through pageantry, music, and impressive rites in honor of saints, martyrs, and departed friends, to propitiate their intercession or to endear their memories.

While the pastimes in vogue typify the national mind, and are to serious avocations what the efflorescence of the tree is to its fruit,—a bountiful pledge and augury of prolific energy,—it is only when kept as holidays, set apart by law and usage, consecrated by time and sympathy, that such observances attain their legitimate meaning; and to this end, a certain affinity with character, a spontaneous and not conventional impulse, is essential. The tournament, for instance, was the natural and appropriate pastime of the age of chivalry; it fostered knightly prowess, and made patent the twin-born inspiration of love and valor. As described in *Ivanhoe*, it accords intimately with the spirit of the age and the history of the times; as exhibited to the utilitarian vision and mercantile habits of our own day, in Virginia, it comes no nearer our associations than any theatrical pageant chosen at hazard. What other species of grown men could, in this

age, enact every year, in the neighborhood of Rome, the scenes which make the artists' holiday? As a profession, they retain the instincts of childhood, with little warping from the world around. But imagine a set of mechanics or merchants attempting such a masquerade. The invention, the fancy, the independence, and the *abandon* congenial with artist-life, give unity, picturesqueness, and grace to the pageant; and the speeches, costumes, feasting, and drollery are pre-eminently those of an artists' carnival. It is indispensable that the spirit of a holiday should be native to the scene and the people; and hence all endeavors to graft local pastimes upon foreign communities signally fail. This is illustrated in our immediate vicinity. The genial fellowship and exuberant hospitality with which the first day of the year is celebrated in New York were characteristic among the Dutch colonists, and have been transmitted to their posterity; while the tone of New England society, though more intellectual, is less urbane and companionable. Accordingly, the few enthusiasts who have attempted it have been unable, either by precept or example, to make a Boston New Year's day the complete and hearty festival which renders it *par excellence* the holiday of the Knickerbockers. Charitable enterprise for several years past in the Puritan city has distinguished May-day as a children's floral anniversary; but who that is familiar with the peasant-songs which hail this advent of summer in the South of Europe ever beheld the shivering infants and the wilted leaves paraded in the teeth of an east wind, without a conscious recoil from the anomalous fête? The facts of habit, public sentiment, natural taste, local association, and climate cannot be ignored in holiday institutions, which, like eloquence as defined by Webster, must spring directly from the man, the subject, and the occasion. Any other source is unstable and factitious. Of all affectations, those of diversion are the least endurable; and there is no phase of social life more open to satire, nor any that has provoked it to more legitimate purpose, than the affectation of a taste for art, sporting, the ball-room, the bivouac, the gymnasium, foreign travel, country life, nautical adventure, or literary amusements; an affectation yielding, as we know, food for the

most spicy irony, from Goldoni's *Filosofo Inglese* to Hood's cockney ruralist and Punch's amateur sportsman or verdant tourist. And what is true of personal incongruities, is only the more conspicuous in social and national life.

When our literary pioneer sought to awaken the fraternal sentiment of his countrymen towards their ancestral land, he described with sympathetic zest an English Christmas in an old family mansion; and the most popular of modern novelists can find no more potent spell whereby to excite a charitable glow in two hemispheres than a "Christmas Carol." In New as well as in Old England, the once absolute sway of this greatest of Christian festivals has been checked by Puritan zeal. We must look to the ancient ballads, obsolete plays, and musty Church traditions, to ascertain what this hallowed season was in the British Islands, when wassail and the Yule-log, largess and the Lord of Misrule, the mistle-toe-bough, boars' heads, holly-wreaths, midnight chimes, the gathering of kindred, the anthem, the prayer, the games of children, the good cheer of the poor,—forgiveness, gratulation, worship,—all that revelry hails and religion consecrates, made holiday in palace, manor, and cottage throughout the land,—winter's robe of ermine everywhere vividly contrasting with evergreen decorations, the frosty air with the warmth of household fires, the cold sky with the incense of hospitable hearths; when King Charles acted, Ben Jonson wrote a masque, Milton a hymn, lords and peasants flocked to the altar, parents and children gathered round the board, and church, home, way-side, town, and country bore witness to one mingled and hearty sentiment of festivity. Identical in season with the Roman Saturnalia, and the time when the Scalds let "wildly loose their red locks fly," Christmas is sanctioned by all that is venerable in association, as well as tender and joyous in faith. It is deeply to be regretted that with us its observance is almost exclusively confined to the Romanists and Episcopalians. The sentiment of all Christian denominations is equally identified with its commemoration, the event it celebrates being essentially momentous alike to all who profess Christianity; and although the forlorn description by Pepys of a Puritan Christmas will not

apply to the occasion here, its comparative neglect, which followed Bloody Mary's reign, continues among too many of the sects that found refuge in America. There are abundant indications that, if the clergy would initiate the movement, the laity are prepared to make Christmas among us the universal religious holiday, which all considerations of piety, domestic affection, and traditional reverence unite to proclaim it.

The humanities of time, if we may so designate the periods consecrated to repose and festivity, were thoroughly appreciated by the most quaint and genial of English essayists. The boon of leisure, the amenities of social intercourse, the sacredness and the humors of old-fashioned holidays, have found their most loving interpreter in our day, in Charles Lamb. Hear him.

"I must have leave, in the fulness of my soul, to regret the abolition and doing-away-with-altogether of those *consolatory interstices*, and *sprinklings of freedom*, through the four seasons, the *red-letter days*, now become, to all intents and purposes, *dead-letter days*. There was Paul and Stephen and Barnabas, Andrew and John, men famous in old times, — we were used to keep all their days holy, as long back as I was at school at Christ's. I remember their effigies, by the same token, in the old Basket Prayer-Book. I honored them all, and could almost have wept the defalcation of Iscariot, so much did we love to keep holy memories sacred: — only methought I a little grudged at the coalition of the *better Jude* with Simon, — clubbing (as it were) their sanctities together to make up one poor gaudy-day between them, — as an economy unworthy of the dispensation. These were bright visitations in a scholar's and a clerk's life, — 'far off their coming shone.' I was as good as an almanac in those days."

And who has written, like Lamb, of the forlorn pathos of the charity-boy's "objectless holiday," — of the "most touching peal which rings out the old year," — of "the safety which a palpable hallucination warrants" on All-Fools', — and of the "Immortal Go-between," Saint Valentine?

The devotion to the immediate, the thrift, the enterprise, and the material activity, which pertain to a new country, and especially to our own, distinguish American holidays from those of the Old World. Not a few of them are consecrated

to the future, many spring from the triumphs of the present, and nearly all hint progress rather than retrospection. We inaugurate civic and local improvements ; glorify the achievements of mechanical skill and of social reform ; pay honor, by feasts, processions, and rhetoric, to public men ; give a municipal ovation to a foreign patriot, or a funeral pageant to a native statesman. Our festivals are chiefly on occasions of economical interest. Daily toil is suspended and gala assemblies convene to rejoice over the completion of an aqueduct or a railroad, or the launching of an ocean-steamer.

One of the earliest of these economical displays — memorable equally from the great principle it initiated and the felicitous auguries of the holiday itself — was the celebration of the opening of the Erie Canal, the first of a series of grand internal improvements which have since advanced our national prosperity beyond all historical precedent ; and one of the last was the excursion which signalized the union by railroads of the Atlantic sea-coast and the Mississippi River. The two celebrations were but festive landmarks in one magnificent system. The enterprise commenced in Western New York in 1817 was consummated in Illinois in 1854, when the last link was riveted to the chain which binds the vast line of Eastern coast to the great river of the West, and the genius of communication, so essential to our unity and prosperity, brought permanently together the boundless harvest-fields of the interior and the mighty fleets of the seaboard. To European eyes, the sight of the thousand invited guests conveyed from New York to the Falls of St. Anthony would yield a thrilling impression of the scale of festal arrangements in this republic ; and were they to scan the reports of popular anniversaries and conventions in our journals, embracing every class and vocation, representative of every art, trade, and interest, a conviction would inevitably arise that we are the most social and holiday nation in the world, — on the constant *qui vive* for any plausible excuse for public dinners, speeches, processions, songs, toasts, and other republican divertisements. One month brings round the anniversary banquet of the printers, when Franklin's memory is invoked and his story rehearsed ; ano-

er is marked by the annual symposium and contributions of the Dramatic Fund ; a Temperance jubilee is announced to-day, a picnic of Spiritualists to-morrow ; here we encounter a long train of Sunday scholars, and there are invited to a publishers' feast in a "Crystal Palace" ; the triumph of the "Yacht America" must be celebrated this week, and the anniversary of Clay's birth, or Webster's death, the next ; a clerk delivers a poem before a Mercantile Library Association, a mechanic addresses his fellows ; exhibitions of fruit, of fowls, of cattle, of machines, of horses, — ploughing-matches, schools, and pictures, — lead to social gatherings and volunteer discourses, and make a holiday now for the farmer and now for the artisan, so that the programme of festivals, such as they are, is coextensive with the land and the calendar. All this proves that there is no lack of holiday instinct among us, but it also demonstrates that the spirit of utility, the pride of occupation, and the ambition of success, pervade the recreative, as they do the serious, life of America. The American enters into festivity as if it were a serious business ; he cannot take pleasure naturally, like the European, and is pursued by a half-conscious remorse if he dedicates time to amusement ; so that even our holidays seem rather an ordeal to be gone through with, than an occasion to be enjoyed. At many of these fêtes, too, we are painfully conscious of interested motives which are essentially opposed to genuine recreation. Capital is made of amusement, as of every other conceivable element of our national life. It is often to advertise the stock, to introduce the breed, to gain political influence, to win fashionable suffrages to a scheme or a product of art or industry, that these expensive arrangements are made, these hospitalities exercised, these guests convened. Too many of our so-called holidays are tricks of trade, too many are exclusively utilitarian, too many consecrate external success and material well-being, and too few are based on sentiment, taste, and good-fellowship. In a panorama of national holidays, therefore, — instead of a crowd of gracefully attired rustics waltzing under trees, an enthusiastic chorus breathing, as one deep voice, the popular chant, ladies veiled in *tulle* fol-

lowing an imperial infant to a cathedral altar, the garlands and maidens of Old England's May-day, or the splendid evolutions of the Continental soldiery, — we should be most aptly represented by a fleet of steamers with crowded decks and gay pennons, sweeping through the lofty and wooded bluffs of the Upper Mississippi, the procession of boats and regiment of marines disembarking in the bay of Yedo, or the old hall in whose sleeping echoes lives the patriotic eloquence of the Revolution thronged with hundreds of children invited by the city authorities to the annual school festival; for these occasions typify the enterprise at home, the exploration abroad, and the system of public instruction, which constitute our specific and absolute distinction in the family of nations. A jovial eclectic could, notwithstanding, gather traces of the partial and isolated festivals of every race and country in America; — harvest-songs among the German settlers of Pennsylvania, here a "golden wedding," there a private grape-feast; in the South a tournament, at Hoboken a cricket-match, and an archery club at Sunnyside; a Vienna lager-bier dance in New York, or a vinedressers' merry-making in Ohio.

If from those holidays which arise from temporary causes we turn to those which, from annual recurrence, aspire to the dignity of institutions, the first thing which strikes us is their essentially local character. "Pilgrim Day," wherever kept, is a New England festival; "Evacuation Day" belongs to the city of New York; the anniversary of the battle of Bunker Hill is celebrated only in Charlestown; and the victory on Lake Erie, at Newport, where its hero resided. The events thus commemorated deserve their eminence in our regard; and patriotic sentiment is excited and maintained by such observances. Yet, in many instances, they have dwindled to a lifeless parade, and in others have become a somewhat invidious exaggeration of local self-complacency. The latter is the case, for instance, with the New England Society's annual feast in the commercial metropolis of the Union. It occasionally tries the patience and vexes the liberal sentiment of the considerate son of New England, to hear the reiterated laudation of her schools, her clergy, her women, her

cod-fish, and her granite, at the hospitable board where sits, perhaps, a venerable Knickerbocker, conscious that the glib orators and their people have worked themselves into all places of honor and profit, where the honest burgomaster used to smoke the pipe of peace and comfort in his generous portico,—his children now superseded by the restless emigrants from the Eastern States, who thus boastfully trace all that redeems and sustains the republic to the wisdom, foresight, and moral superiority of their own peculiar ancestry. The style of the festival is often in bad taste; there is too little recognition of the hospitality of their adopted home, too little respect for Manhattan blood; an exuberance of language too conspicuously triumphant over a race which the best of comic histories illustrates by the reign of Peter the Silent; so that, at length, a jocosé reproof was administered by the toast of a humorist present, who gave, with irresistible nasal emphasis, — “Plymouth Rock,—the blarney-stone of New England.”

It is, however, an appropriate illustration of the cosmopolitan population of New York, that every year her English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, French, German, and Dutch children, after their own fashion, recall their respective national associations. In point of oratory the New England Society carries the day, inasmuch as it usually presses into its service some distinguished speaker from abroad; in geniality, revival of antique customs, and long-drawn reminiscences, the St. Nicholas excels; at St. Andrew’s board, the memory of Burns is revived in song; Monsieur extols his vanished *Republique*; Welsh harps tinkle at St. David’s; “God save the Queen” echoes under the banner of St. George; green sprigs and uncouth garments mark the Irish procession of St. Patrick; and the Germans multiply their festivals by summer picnics, at which lager-bier, waltzing, and fine instrumental music recall the gardens of Vienna. “Thanksgiving-Day” is of Puritan origin, and was designed to combine family reunions with a grateful recognition of the autumnal harvest. The former beautiful feature is not as salient now as when the absence of locomotive facilities made it a rare privilege for the scattered members of a house-

hold to come together around the paternal hearth. The occasion has also diminished in value as one of clerical emancipation from Sabbath themes, when the preacher could expatiate unreprieved on the questions of the day and the aspects of the times, — that privilege being now exercised, at will, on the regular day of weekly religious service. "Fast-Day" has also become anomalous; its abolition or identification with Good Friday has been repeatedly advocated; strictly speaking, its title is a misnomer, and the actual observance of it is too partial and ineffective to have any true significance.

An old town on the northeastern extremity of an island, the nearest approach to which overland is from the southern shore of Cape Cod, was eagerly visited annually, until within a few years, by those who delight in primitive character and local festivals. The broad plain beyond the town was long held in common property by the inhabitants, as a sheep-pasture. It may be that the maritime occupations of the natives, their insular position, and frugal habits imparted, by contrast, a singular relish to the rural episode thus secured in their lives of hazardous toil and dreary absence, as sailors and whalemén; but it is remarkable that amid the sands of that island flourished one of the heartiest and most characteristic of New England festivals. Simplicity of manners, hardihood, frankness, the genial spirit of the mariner, and the unsophisticated energy and kindness of the sailor's wife, gave to the Nantucket "Sheep-Shearing" a rare and wonderful freshness and charm. Unfortunately, discord, arising from the conflicting interests of these primitive islanders, at length made it desirable to restore peace by sacrificing the flocks, — innocent provocatives of this domestic feud; the sheep were sold, and the unique festival to which they gave occasion vanished with them. We must turn to that most available resource, an old newspaper, for a description of this now obsolete holiday: —

"*Sheep-Shearing.* — This patriarchal festival was celebrated on Monday and Tuesday last, in this place, with more than ordinary interest. For some days previous, the sheep-drivers had been busily employed in collecting from all quarters of the island the dispersed members of the several flocks, and committing them to the great sheepfold, about two miles from town, preparatory to the ceremonies of ablution and *devestment*.

“The principal enclosure contains three hundred acres; towards one side of this area, and near the margin of a considerable pond, are four or five circular fences, one within the other,—like Captain Symmes’s concentric curves,—and about twenty feet apart, forming a sort of labyrinth. Into these circuits the sheep are gradually driven, so as to be designated by their ‘ear-marks,’ and secured for their proper owners in sheepcots arranged laterally, or nearly so, around the exterior circle. Contiguous to these smaller pens, each of which is calculated to contain about one hundred sheep, the respective owners had erected temporary tents, wherein the operation of shearing was usually performed. The number of hands engaged in this service may be imagined from the fact that one gentleman is the owner of about 1,000 sheep, another of 700, and numerous others of smaller flocks, varying in number from three or four hundred down to a single dozen. The business of identifying, seizing, and yarding the sheep creates a degree of bustle that adds no small amusement to the general activity of the scene. The whole number of sheep and lambs brought within the great enclosure is said to be 16,000. There are also several large flocks commonly sheared at other parts of the island.

“As these are the only important holidays which the inhabitants of Nantucket have ever been accustomed to observe, it is not to be marvelled at that all other business should on such occasions be suspended; and that the labors attendant thereon should be mingled with a due share of recreation. Accordingly, the fancies of the juvenile portion of our community are for a long time prior to the annual ‘Shearing’ occupied in dreams of fun and schemes of frolic. With the mind’s eye, they behold the long array of tents, surmounted with motley banners flaunting in the breeze, and stored with tempting tit-bits, candidates for money and for mastication. With the mind’s ear they distinguish the spirit-stirring scream of the fiddle, the gruff jangling of the drum, the somniferous *smorzando* of the jew’s-harp, and the enlivening scuffle of little feet in a helter-skelter jig upon a deal platform. And their visions, unlike those of riper mortals, are always realized. For be it known, that, independent of the preparations made by persons actually concerned in the mechanical duties of the day, there are erected on a rising ground in the vicinity of the sheep-field some twenty pole and sail-cloth edifices, furnished with seats, and tables, and casks, and dishes, severally filled with jocund faces, baked pigs, punch, and cakes, and surrounded with divers savory concomitants in the premises, courteously dispensed by the changeful master of ceremonies, studious of custom and emulous of cash. For the accommodation of those merry urchins and youngsters who choose to ‘trip it on the light, fantastic toe,’ a floor

is laid at one corner, over which presides some African genius of melody, brandishing a cracked violin, and drawing most moving notes from its agonized intestines, by dint of griping fingers and right-angled elbows.

“We know of no parallel for this section of the entertainment, other than what the Boston boys were wont to denominate *Nigger 'Llection*, — so called in contradistinction from *Artillery Election*. At the former anniversary, which is the day on which ‘who is Governor’ is officially announced, the blacks and blackees are permitted to perambulate the Mall and Common, to buy gingerbread and beer with the best of folks, and to mingle in the mysteries of pawpaw. But on the latter day, when that grave and chivalrous corps known as the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company parade for choice of officers, — which officers are to receive their diplomas directly from the hands of his Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, in open day, and in the august presence of all sorts of civil and martial dignitaries, — why, woe to the sable imp that shall *then* adventure his woolly poll and tarnished cuticle within the hallowed neighborhood of nobility!

“On previous days the sheep had been collected from every quarter of the island, driven into the great fold at Miacomet (the site of an ancient Indian settlement, about a mile from town), selected and identified by their respective owners, placed in separate pens, and subjected to the somewhat arduous process of *washing*, in the large pond contiguous. After this preparatory ablution, they were then ready to ‘throw off this muddy vesture of decay,’ by the aid of some hundreds of shearers, who began to ply their vocation on Monday morning, seated in rude booths, or beneath umbrageous awnings ranged around the circular labyrinth of enclosures, wherein the panting animals awaited the devestment of their uncomfortable jackets. The space partially occupied by the unshorn and their contented lambs, and in other spots exhibiting multitudes stripped of their fleece and clamorously seeking their wandering young, presented to the eye and ear of the stranger sights and sounds somewhat rare.”

We have sometimes been tempted to believe that all illustrious occasions, men, and things in this republic must inevitably be profaned, — that, as a compensatory balance to the “greatest good of the greatest number,” secured by democratic institutions, there must exist a sacrifice of the hallowed, aspiring, and consecrated elements of national feeling and achievement. If there is an anniversary which should compel respect, excite eternal gratitude, and win unhackneyed

observance, it is that of the day when, for the first time in the world's history, the select intelligences of a country proclaimed to the nations, with deliberate and resolved wisdom, the principles of human equality and the right of self-government, pledged thereto their lives, fortunes, and honor, and consistently redeemed the heroically prophetic pledge. Subsequent events have only deepened the significance of that act, and extended its agency; every succeeding year has increased its moral value and its material fruits; the career of other and less happy nations has given more and more relief to its isolated grandeur; and not a day fraught with richer hope and glory lives in the calendar. Yet what is the actual observance, the average estimation, it boasts among us? In our large cities, especially in New York, "Independence" is, by universal consent, a nuisance. It is most auspicious to the Chinese, from increasing the importation of fire-crackers. The municipal authorities provide for it, as for a lawless Saturnalia; the fire department dread its approach, as indicative of conflagrations; physicians, as hazardous to such unfortunate patients as cannot be removed into the country; quiet citizens, as insufferable from incessant detonation; the prudent, as fraught with reckless tomfoolery; and the respectable, as desecrated by rowdyism. John Adams, when he prophesied that the Fourth of July would be hailed, in all after time, by the ringing of bells, the blaze of bonfires, and the roar of cannon, was far from intending, by this programme of Anglo-Saxon methods of popular rejoicing, to indicate the exclusive and ultimate style of our national holiday. On its earlier recurrence, while many of the actors in the scenes it commemorates still lived, there was an interest and a meaning in the ceremonies, which time has lessened. Yet it is difficult to account for the absence of all that high civilization presupposes in the celebration of our only holiday which can strictly be called national; and if the sympathies of the most intelligent of our citizens could be enlisted, so as to make the occasion a genuine patriotic jubilee, instead of a noisy carnival, or a time for political animosity to assert itself with special emphasis, much would be gained on the score of rational enjoyment and American fraternity. As it is, although the

"Hundred Boston Orators" nobly vindicates the talent and good taste of one city in regard to this anniversary, and is a most pleasing historical memorial of the occasion, it cannot be denied that our usual synonyme for bombast and mere rhetorical patriotism is "a Fourth of July oration," and that Pickwickian sentiment, pyrotechnic flashes, torpedos, arrests, bursting cannon, draggled flags, crowded steamboats, the disgust of the educated, and the uproar of the multitude, make up the confused and wearisome details of what should and might be a sacred feast, a pious memory, a hallowed consecration, a "Sabbath-day of Freedom." Perhaps the real zest of this holiday is felt only abroad, when, under some remote consular flag, at the board of private and munificent hospitality in London, or at an American *reunion* in the French capital, distance from home, the ties of common nativity in a foreign land, and the contrast of uneducated masses or despotic insignia around with the prosperous, free, and enlightened population of our own favored country, to say nothing of superior festal arrangements, render the occasion at once charming and memorable.

One of the most noticeable features of American life to a stranger's eye is the prevalent habit of travel; and although the incessant and huge caravans that rush along the numerous railways which make an iron network over this Confederacy are, for the most part, impelled by motives of enterprise and thrift, yet the common idea of recreation is associated with a "trip." Whether the facilities or the temperament of our country, or both, be the reason of this locomotive propensity, it is a characteristic which at once distinguishes the American from the home-tethered German, the Paris-bound Frenchman, and the locally-patriotic Italian. The schoolboy in vacation, the college graduate, the bridegroom, the overtasked professional man, — all Americans who give themselves a "holiday," are wont to dedicate it to a journey. But even this resource has lost much of its original charm from the catastrophes which have associated some of the most beautiful scenery of the land with the most agonizing of human tragedies. In the crystal waters of Lake George, by the picturesque banks of the Hudson, amid the

fertile valleys of the Connecticut, on the teaming currents of Long Island Sound, have perished, often through reckless hardihood, always by more or less reprehensible negligence, some of the fairest and the noblest of our citizens. The statistics of these melancholy events, which have so often appalled the public, have yet to be written; but their moral effect may be divined by a mere glance at the mercenary hardihood and soulless haste that mark our civilization. "Les dangers personnels," says an acute writer, "quand ils atteignent un certain limite, bouleversent tous les rapports et l'oubli de l'esperance change presque notre nature." The zest, too, of a journey in America is much diminished by the monotonous character of the people, and by the gregarious habits, the rapid transits, and the business motives of the *voyageurs*, so that it is only at the *terminus* that we enjoy our pilgrimage. There the sight of a magnificent prairie or mountain range, cataract or mammoth cave, may, indeed, vindicate our locomotive taste, and the wonders of nature make, for the imaginative and reverential, a glorious holiday.

A pleasing feature in the recreative aspect of American life is the literary festival. It is a beautiful custom of our scholars annually to meet amid the scenes of their academical education and renew youthful friendships, while they listen to the orator and poet, who dwell upon those problems of the times which challenge an intellectual solution, and identify the duties of the citizen with the offices of learning. Within the memory of almost all, there is probably at least one of these occasions when the interest of the performances or the circumstances of the hour lent a memorable charm to the collegiate holiday; when, under the shade of venerable elms, that witnessed the first outpouring of mental enthusiasm or the earliest honors of genius and attainment, they who parted as boys met as men, and the classic dreamer felt himself a recognized and practical thinker for the people; when the language of eloquent wisdom or poetic beauty came warm from lips hallowed by the chalice of fame. Who that listened ever can forget the anniversary graced by the chaste eloquence of Buckminster, that on which Bryant recited "The Ages," or Everett's musical periods welcomed

Lafayette to the oldest seat of American learning? What New England scholar, after years of professional labor in a distant State, ever found himself once more within the charmed precincts of his *alma mater*, and surrounded by the companions of his youthful studies, without a thrill of happy reminiscence? Yet even these rational opportunities for what should be a genuine holiday to mind and heart are but casually appreciated. The sultry period of their occurrence, the irregularity of attendance, and the precarious quality of the "feast of reason" provided, have caused them gradually to lose a tenacious hold upon the affections. While there are a few *habitués*, the majority — especially those who live at a distance from the scene, and whose presence is, therefore, especially desirable — are not loyal pilgrims to the shrine where their virgin distinction was earned and their intellectual armor forged. To many, our literary festivals are but technical ceremonies, — to not a few, wearisome forms, — associated rather with fans, didactics, perspiration, and cold viands, than with any social or intellectual refreshment. The "lean annuitant" who loved to visit "Oxford in vacation" and fancy himself a gourmand, and the ingenious "Opium Eater" who has recorded the enduring claims of those venerable cloisters to the scholar's gratitude, enjoyed speculatively more of the real luxury of academic repose and triumph than is often attained by those who ostensibly participate in our college festivals; and seldom do the children go up to the altars of wisdom consecrated by the pious zeal of our ancestors, with the faithful recognition of the venerable pastor, so long the statistical oracle of the surviving graduates, who, while his strength sufficed, cheerily walked from his rural parish to Old Harvard, to lead off the anniversary Psalm, with genial pride and honest self-gratulation.

Of our purely social holidays, New Year's Day, as observed in the city of New York, bears the palm. Initiated by the hospitable instinct of the Dutch colonists, neither the heterogeneous population which has succeeded them, nor the annually enlarged circuit of the metropolis, has diminished the universality or the heartiness of its observance. When the

snow is massed in the thoroughfares, and the sunshine tempers a clear frosty atmosphere, a more cheerful scene, on a large scale, it is impossible to imagine. From morning to midnight sleighs freighted with gay companions and drawn by handsome steeds dash merrily along,—the tinkle of their bells and the scarlet lining of their buffalo-robcs redolent of a fête; the sidewalks are alive with hurrying pedestrians, who exchange cordial greetings as they pass one another; doors incessantly fly open; guests come and go; every one looks prosperous and happy; business is totally suspended; in warm parlors, radiant with comfort or splendid with luxury, sit the wives, daughters, sisters, or fair favorites of these innumerable visitors, the queens of the day; the neglects of the past are forgiven and forgotten in the welcome of the present; kindred, friends, and acquaintance all meet and begin the year with mutual good wishes; in every dwelling a little feast stands ready, encompassed with smiles; and all varieties of fortune, all degrees of intimacy, all tastes in dress, entertainment, and manners, on this one day, are consecrated by the liberal and kindly spirit of a social carnival.

Of associations expressly instituted for the observance of holidays, there is no lack; of days technically devoted to festivity, in the aggregate, our proportion equals that of older communities; and the legitimate occasions for pastime and ceremony, social pleasure and historical commemoration, are as numerous as is consistent with the industrious habits and the civic prosperity of the land. The traveller who should make it his specialty to discover and note the ostensible merry-makings and pageants of America, would find the list neither brief nor monotonous. In the summer he would light upon many an excursion on our beautiful lakes, many a chowder-party to the sea-side and picnic in the grove; in the winter, would catch the shrill echo of the skating frolic. Here, through pillared trunks, he would behold the smoke-wreaths of the sugar-camp; there, watch laughing groups clustered round the cider-mill or hop-field, and, in woods radiant with autumnal tints, or prairies balmy with a million flowers, would sounds of merriment announce to him the cheerful bivouac. Nor have American holidays, even in their

most primitive aspect, been devoid of use and beauty. The once renowned "musters" fostered military taste, and the cattle-shows encouraged agricultural science; with the increase of horticultural festivals, our fruits and flowers have constantly improved; regattas and yacht-clubs have indirectly promoted nautical architecture; school festivals attest the superiority of our system of popular education; family gatherings, on the large scale observed in several instances, have induced genealogical research; historical celebrations have led to the collection and preservation of local archives and memorials; the Cincinnati Society annually renews the noblest patriotic sympathies; and the genius for mechanical invention is proclaimed by the fairs which, every October, bring together so many trophies of skilful handiwork and husbandry, and recognize so emphatically the dignity and scientific amelioration of labor. Yet these facts do not invalidate the general truth, that our festivals are too much tinctured with utilitarian aims to breathe earnestness and hilarity; that they are so specific as to represent the division, rather than the social triumphs, of human toil; that they are too partial in their scope, too sectional in their objects, and too isolated in their arrangements, to meet the claims of popular and permanent interests. Our harvests are songless. Reaping-machines have diminished the zest of autumn's golden largess, as destructive inventions have lessened the miracles of chivalry. Here and there may yet convene a quilting-party; but locomotive facilities have deprived rural gatherings, in sparse neighborhoods, of their marvel and their joy, and the hilarious huskings of old chiefly survive in Barlow's neglected verse:—

"The days grow short; but though the fallen sun
To the glad swain proclaims his day's work done,
Night's pleasant shades his various tasks prolong,
And yield new subjects to my various song.
For now, the corn-house filled, the harvest home,
The invited neighbors to the *husking* come;
A frolic scene, where work, and mirth, and play,
Unite their charms to chase the hours away.
Where the huge heap lies centred in the hall,
The lamp suspended from the cheerful wall,

Brown, corn-fed nymphs, and strong, hard-handed beaux,
Alternate ranged, extend in circling rows,
Assume their seats, the solid mass attack ;
The dry husks rustle, and the corn-cobs crack ;
The song, the laugh, alternate notes resound,
And the sweet cider trips in silence round.
The laws of husking every wight can tell,
And sure no laws he ever keeps so well :
For each red ear a general kiss he gains,
With each smut ear he smuts the luckless swains ;
But when to some sweet maid a prize is cast,
Red as her lips and taper as her waist,
She walks the round and culls one favored beau,
Who leaps the luscious tribute to bestow.
Various the sports, as are the wits and brains
Of well-pleased lasses and contending swains ;
Till the vast mound of corn is swept away,
And he that gets the last ear wins the day."

Progress in taste and sentiment, however, is already obvious in our recreative arrangements. There is vastly more of intellectual dignity and permanent use in the fêtes of the Lyceum, than in those of the training-days and election-jubilees which formerly were the chief holidays of our rural population ; exhibitions of flowers mark a notable advance upon the coarse diversions of the ring and the race-ground ; and, within a year, four statues by native artists, worthy of their illustrious subjects, have been inaugurated by public rites and noble eloquence.

A radical cause of the inefficiency, and therefore of the indifferent observance, of our holidays, may be found in our national inadequacy of expression, in the want of those modes of popular rejoicing and ceremonial that win and triumph from their intrinsic beauty. As a general truth, it may be asserted that but two methods of representing holiday sentiment are native to the average taste of our people, — military display and oral discourse. These exhaust our festal resources. Our citizens have an extraordinary facility in making occasional speeches, and the love of soldiership is so prevalent, that it is the favorite sport of children, and all classes indulge in costly uniforms and volunteer parades. But

the language of Art, which in the Old World lends such a permanent attraction to holidays, with us hardly finds voice. Had we requiems conceived with the profound pathos of Mozart, harmonious embodiments of rural pastime like that which Beethoven caught while sitting on a stile amid the subdued murmurs of a summer evening, melodious invocations to freedom such as Bellini's thrilling duo; were a symphony as readily composed in America as an oration, tableaux, costumes, and processions as artistically invented here as in France; were dance and song as spontaneously expressive as among the European peasantry; had we vast, open, magnificent temples, free gardens, statues to crown, shrines to frequent, palatial balconies, fields elysian for both rich and poor, a sensibility to music and a sense of the appropriate and beautiful as wide and as instinctive as our appreciation of the useful, the practical, and the comfortable, — it would no longer be requisite to resort exclusively to drums, fifes, powder, substantial viands, and speechifying, to give utterance to the common sentiments, which would find vent in tones, forms, hues, combinations, and sympathies that would respond to the heart, through the imagination, and conform "the show of things to the desires of the mind."

Other causes of our deficient holidays are obvious. The primary are to be found in the absorption in business and the dominion of practical habits both of thought and action. Enterprise holds carnival while Poetry keeps lent. The facts of to-day shut out of view the perspective of time, or, at best, lure the gaze forward with boundless expectancy. To rehearse the fortunate achievements of the past gratifies our national egotism; but the sensibility and meditation which consecrate historical associations find no room amid the rush and eagerness of the present. Content to point to the heroic episode of the Revolution, to the wisdom and justice of our Constitution, to the caravans that sweep on iron tracks over leagues of what a few years ago was pathless forest, to the swiftest keels and most graceful models that traverse the ocean, to the aerial viaducts that span dizzy heights and impetuous torrents, to the exquisite vignettes of a limitless paper currency, to the dignified and consistent

maintenance of usurped law in younger States of the Confederacy, and to the continually increasing resources of its older members,—we are disposed to sneer at the childish love of amusement which beguiles the inhabitants of European capitals, and to pity the superstition and idleness which retain, in this enlightened age, the melodramatic church shows of Romanism. In all this, there is doubtless a certain manly intelligence; but there is also an inauspicious moral hardness. If, as a people, we cultivated more heartily the social instincts and humane sentiments expressed in holiday rites, life would be more valued, the whole nature would find congenial play, and our taskwork and duty, our citizenship, and our natural advantages would be adorned by gracefulness, alacrity, and repose. Quantity would not be so grossly estimated above quality, speed above security, routine above enjoyment. We need to win from time what is denied to us in material. Other nations have in Art a permanent and accessible refreshment, which prevents life from being wholly prosaic; the humblest dweller on English soil can enter a time-hallowed and beautiful cathedral; the poorest rustic in Italy can feel the honest pride of a distinctive festal attire; the veriest clodhopper in Germany can soften the rigors of poverty by music; the London apprentice may wander once a week amid the venerable beauties of Hampton Court; and the Parisian shopkeeper may kindle pride of country by reading the pictorial history of France at Versailles. It is not the expensive arrangements, but the national provision, and, above all, the personal sentiment, which makes the holiday. There was more holy rapture in the low cadence of the hymn stealing from the Roman Catacombs, where the hunted Christians of old kept holy the Sabbath day, than there is in the gorgeous display and complex melody under the magnificent dome of St. Peter's. There was more of the grace of festivity in such a dance as poor Goldsmith's flute enlivened on the banks of the Loire, than there is in the grand ball which marks the season's climax at an American watering-place. In public not less than private banquets, the Scriptural maxim holds true: "Better is a dinner of herbs *where love is*." Our national life is too diffusive to yield the best social fruits.

The extent of territory, the nomadic habits of our people, the alternations of climate, the vicissitudes of trade, the prevalence of spasmodic and superficial excitements, the boundless passion for gain, the local changes, the family separations, and the incessant fevers of opinion, scatter the holy fire of love, reverence, self-respect, contemplation, and faith. What a senseless boast, that the United States has thirty-five thousand miles of railroad, while England claims but ninety-two hundred, France forty-eight hundred, if against the American overplus are to be arrayed countless hecatombs of murdered fellow-citizens, and desolating frauds unparalleled in the history of finance! What a mockery the distinction of having accumulated a fortune in a few years, by sagacity and toil, if, to complete the record, it is added that mercenary ambition risked and lost it in as many months, or the want of self-control and mental resources made its possession a life-long curse from *ennui* or tasteless extravagance! It is as a check to the whirl of inconsiderate speculation, an antidote to the bane of material luxury, an interval in the hurried march of executive life, that holidays should "give us pause," and might prove a means of refinement and of disinterestedness. We could thus infuse a better spirit into our work-day experience, refresh and warm the nation's heart, and gradually concentrate what of higher taste and more genial sympathy underlies the restless and cold tide that hurries us onward, unmindful of the beauty and indifferent to the sanctities with which God and nature have invested our existence.

Of natal anniversaries we have on our national calendar one which it would augur well for the Republic to observe as a universal holiday. Every sentiment of gratitude, veneration, and patriotism has already consecrated it to the private heart, and every consideration of unity, good faith, and American feeling designates its celebration as the most sacred civic fête of the land. Recent demonstrations in literature, art, and oratory indicate that the obligation and importance of keeping before the eyes, minds, and affections of the people the memory of Washington are emphatically recognized by genius and popular sentiment. Within a few months, the pen of our most endeared author, the eloquence of our most fin-

ished orator, and the chisel of our best sculptor, have combined to exhibit, in the most authentic and impressive forms of literary and plastic art, the character and image of the Father of his Country. Copies of Stewart's masterly portrait have been multiplied. A monument bearing the revered name is slowly rising at the capital, the materials of which are gathered from every part of the globe. Measures are in progress for securing his ancestral domain and his modest sepulchre as national property. In his native State, a splendid memorial of enduring beauty and historical significance will soon be completed. A new and admirable biography, with all the elements of standard popularity, will soon make his peerless career familiar to every citizen, from the woods of Maine to the shores of the Pacific. One effective statue already ornaments the commercial emporium, and another is projected, with every prospect of success, for the city of Boston. These and many other signs of the times prove that the fanaticism of party strife has awakened the wise and loyal to a consciousness of the inestimable value of that great example and canonized name, as a bond of union, a conciliating memory, and a glorious watchword. The present, therefore, is a favorable moment to institute the birthday of Washington, hitherto but partially and ineffectually honored, as a solemn national festival. Around his tomb let us annually gather; let eloquence and song, leisure and remembrance, trophies of art, ceremonies of piety, and sentiments of gratitude and admiration, consecrate that day with a unanimity of feeling and of rites, which shall fuse and mould into one pervasive emotion the divided hearts of the country, until the discordant cries of faction are lost in the anthems of benediction and of love, and, before the august spirit of a people's homage, sectional animosity is awed into universal reverence.